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BODLEY'S FRANCE.

EVERY one is familiar with the story of the visitor to Paris who, on asking a bookseller for a copy of the French Constitution, was informed by the proprietor of the shop that he did not sell periodicals. The anecdote illustrates very forcibly the tortuous course French institutions have taken since that mighty explosion of more than a century ago tore the ship of state from her ancient moorings and drove her aimlessly and helplessly on the tempestuous seas of political experiment. And as yet no safe haven appears to have been found. An evil genius seems to follow in the wake of every tentative effort to restore the orderly administration of justice under all conceivable forms of government until the word "despair" is writ large on almost every intellectual product of this naturally methodical and happy people. Where lies the seat of the trouble? Is it the fickleness of the race? Is it a childish incapacity that requires a strong arm to support and guide it? Or was the Revolution, perchance, too violent to permit an early return to normal conditions? Whatever explanation may be offered to account for the vagaries of French history during the past hundred years and more, France and her people will always inspire the interest of the world; for the influences that have radiated from their polished capital have penetrated every domain of human thought and action, and will live until the end of time. But, aside from the universal potency of those influences, Gallic traditions and experiments possess in themselves an interest and value of unsurpassed importance to every believer in the virtue of well-conceived and well-executed ideas of republican government. To Americans France has ever appealed in numerous ways, not only because of the friendship so munificently extended us at a most critical period in our history, but also on account of the natural

¹ By J. E. Courtney Bodley. 2 vols. 8vo., pp. 346, 504. London and New York: The Macmillan Company, 1898.

sympathy we feel for a people who, like ourselves, have discarded worn-out conceptions of government, and confidently extended to the multitude rights and duties formerly enjoyed exclusively by the few.

Naturally a country like France, whose history is so replete with dramatic events and violent catastrophes, has been the favorite theme of all sorts of writers, but their views are often as conflicting and contradictory as the habits of the people they attempt to describe. Reactionaries, for example, are prone to look upon republican France as hopelessly insane and in need of a strait-jacket; the conservatives point the finger of scorn to this awful illustration of the anarchy that is sure to attend every effort made by a people to govern themselves; while writers with democratic leanings are often disposed to close their eyes to the worst exhibitions of popular government. What many of these writers have failed to do has been to view French history as a whole, assigning to their proper sources those institutions by which the people of France imagine they are governed to-day. That such a plan would involve the nicest balancing of evidence goes without the saying, for much of the political machinery of this remarkable people has been the result of revolution rather than of evolution. Of institutional writers on France there are, of course, a host, both native and alien. Among the former one instinctively thinks of Fustel de Coulanges, whose monumental work treats largely of the beginnings of French history. Of no less value in many respects are the well-known writings of Taine, Guizot, and Duruy, now accessible to every one through translations; and more comprehensive, but more technical as well, are the volumes of Block, Ducrocq, Chéruei, Franceschi, and Villenauve.

The German language also contains numerous publications descriptive of contemporary France, notably Lebon's article in Marquardsen's Handbook and Hillebrand's account of France and the French, now translated into English. Original contributions to the same subject have many times appeared in English, and it is scarcely necessary to do

more than mention in this connection the names of Young, Wenzel, Stephen, and Edwards. These various works, however, are for the most part either inaccessible to the majority of readers, or are of so technical a nature as to repel many readers other than specialists. At the same time, the want of a treatise on France, at once philosophical and interesting, has been long felt, if not expressed. Mr. Bodley's volumes have, therefore, appeared most opportunely, and place within reach of every one not only a singularly lucid and acute exposition of French institutions, but also the results of the work of a patient scholar in a field of unusual interest and importance. Mr. Bodley's work has been compared with the studies of Tocqueville and Bryce; but it is certainly less dry than the justly famous production of the latter, and at the same time contains few of those dangerous predictions which mar the otherwise brilliant contribution to political science furnished by the accomplished Frenchman.

Our author's thesis is the failure of parliamentary government in France, and whether we agree with him or not—and we often find ourselves agreeing with him in spite of ourselves—he certainly makes out a strong case against the suitability of the French genius to anything approaching those time-honored principles English-speaking peoples designate by the expression "local self-government." The first volume is divided into two books, entitled respectively the "French Revolution and Modern France" and the "Constitution and the Chief of the State." Considerable space is devoted to the historical aspects of the Revolution, whose legend is traced through its various forms until it finally met its death at the hands of Taine in his "*Origines de la France Contemporaine*"—a work Mr. Bodley regards as epoch-making, because to it more than to any other book may be attributed the change of mental attitude in France toward the Revolution. The chief effects of the French Revolution on modern France after a hundred years are thus summed up by Mr. Bodley: "There is the great tangible result, the machine of administrative government con-

structed by Napoleon, and there is the psychological or moral result of a people which has never yet found a political government to soothe and weld together the elements unsettled by the great upheaval. For the rest, the Revolution is not responsible for half of the good or of the evil attributed to it. . . . The best that can be said of the French Revolution is that, just when civilization was on the point of making history colorless, it burst forth, and produced for the student and the artist a collection of pictures and documents thrilling and pathetic, grandiose and revolting, such as no epoch of antiquity or of modern times has supplied. But to provide intellectual pleasure for the cultivated it was hardly worth while that millions of the human race should have lamentably perished before their time."

Other chapters of the first book trace the fate of those principles of the First Republic displayed in the device "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity." Toleration appears to be almost unknown in France, and the State interferes in numberless ways from the naming of a child to the testamentary disposition of property. The anticlerical sectaries, moreover, withhold all semblance of freedom from public officials. It is, for example, an unwritten law that the President must not publicly mention the name of God, while attendance at church is calculated to bring an office-holder into bad repute. In case such a one should be foolish enough to own a prayer book or permit his daughter to sing in the choir, he runs the risk of being attacked through the newspapers and dismissed from office. Mr. Bodley declares that unhappily this tyranny of free thought is often retaliation for clerical intolerance in the past. At the same time it would be a mistake to suppose that the free-thinking sectarians confine their attacks to the Roman Catholic Church. They attack all who adhere to any form of religious belief. There are numerous other limitations on private liberty, not the least of which is the outrageous manner in which persons suspected of crime are treated. Liberty appears to exist in name only; and if we are to judge of French criminal procedure by the Zola trial, France

does not essentially differ in this respect from Russia. Contemporary facts equally belie the boasted principles of equality and fraternity with the symbols of which the buildings and walls of France are decorated. Plutocracy is on the increase, titles are bought and sold, and the worst enemies of the French are their own brethren.

In describing the political machinery of the State, Mr. Bodley calls attention to the power and lack of power of the President. It is noteworthy that all the Presidents of the Third Republic have abdicated before the expiration of the seven years' tenure of office save one, and he was assassinated. The tendency of the French, moreover, to classify each individual President is regarded as proof that it is contrary to the instincts of the nation to regard the executive as an impersonal figure. President Faure is no exception to this rule. A business man of Havre, with no tradition connected with his name, he was no sooner elected than the press and public duly invested him with a legend. The following excerpt from Mr. Bodley's work is, therefore, very significant: "The provincial origin of his [M. Faure's] family provoked comparisons with that of M. Thiers; spirited controversies arose as to the precise site of his modest birthplace in an industrial quarter of the capital; his suburban schoolmaster was made the subject of monographs; his practical method of learning the trade of a fellmonger produced the myth that he had begun life as a journeyman tanner, and portraits of a needlessly stained workman were rapturously circulated; while for the satisfaction of the prosperous classes, and to show how fitted he was to impress foreign potentates with the amenity of France, anecdotes were related of his sporting prowess in Hungary, where his affability had inspired an innkeeper to foretell a brilliant future for him. In fact, all the lore that is formed around a dynasty was made ready, as though this respectable merchant of Havre were a new Bonaparte."

The two books into which our author's second volume is divided are devoted respectively to "The Parliamentary System" and "Political Parties." Prefacing his remarks

on these important features of the French constitution with a scholarly dissertation on the general subject of legislative bodies, Mr. Bodley incidentally refers to the long struggle between the advocates of a bicameral and a single-chamber system. Finally, the Senate or Upper House was adopted with many features of its transatlantic prototype, and it may be remarked in passing that this body has unfortunately exhibited the same symptoms of decadence its American model shows. The Senate of France is designed, in large measure, to represent the communes; but of course religious bodies are unrepresented in it, a fact Mr. Bodley apparently regrets. Our author next discusses the manner of conducting elections in France, contrasting their cheapness with the heavy expenses caused by English elections, although manhood suffrage in France causes the voters of that country far to outnumber the voters of England. The Chamber of Deputies—the popular house of the French Assembly—is then described at considerable length, together with parliamentary procedure and practice. The ministerial system is also examined, and an entire chapter devoted to the uninviting subject of corruption under the Republic.

Mr. Bodley's concluding chapters are devoted to the very interesting subject of political parties in France, of which there seems to be no end. Every section of public opinion appears to organize itself into a group, from the royalists to the socialists. Since the Revolution, rise and fall of governments have simply reflected the varying whims of the people. It is encouraging, however, to find that Mr. Bodley defends universal suffrage; and that he by no means attributes the failure of parliamentary government to that source. He is disposed to think that Napoleon's idea of a centralized administration is more in keeping with the needs and instincts of France than mere imitation of the English constitution. This of course does not necessarily imply that the Republic is a failure, but rather indicates the folly of expecting the same form of government to suit all peoples at all times, regardless of racial differences.

B. J. RAMAGE.